

City of Annapolis
Fiscal Year 2014 State of the City Address
Mayor Josh Cohen

Good evening.

Tonight is the fourth time I will present to you a proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year. And before I do, I have the responsibility and privilege of reporting on our State of our City. And I am proud to be able to report that the State of our City is strong. While we still have more ground to cover, getting to this point has been a story of hard work, teamwork, and dedication. You – the City Council, our professional staff, our citizen boards and commissions, the residents and businesspersons whom we serve, and our government partners in Anne Arundel County, the State of Maryland and in Washington, D.C. – together we have made this City strong.

When we reflect back upon the last three times I presented this address to you, it is truly remarkable how rough the waters have been that we have navigated, and how divided we as a community – and the nine of us on the council – have been about how to proceed.

That first State of the City in March of 2010, we were faced with closing a \$23 million budget deficit from the prior fiscal year. I did not want our first course of action to be ask the taxpayers for more funds. So the budget that year made an abrupt course change, cutting expenses and services. Not only did we cut City spending for the first time in 20 years, we cut our budget by a larger percentage than any of Maryland's 157 municipalities, most of whom were facing similarly challenging budgets.

During the State of the City that night, our Council Chambers were packed to overflowing with taxpayers and citizens worried about the state of the City's finances, and with dedicated City employees who had just lost 33 of their co-workers to layoffs three days before. A friend of mine who was in the audience that night observed how the grassroots democratic process that was on display in our City Hall was truly a microcosm of the broader national political debate that, unfortunately, is still stymieing our Congress today.

The two subsequent State of the City Addresses also focused on serious issues. We realigned our taxes and fees to reflect the accurate costs of service, we responded to a dramatic drop in the City's assessable base, and we modernized and streamlined our solid waste program, leading to the largest privatization of City services in memory.

Through these past three years we have worked remarkably well together towards a shared goal, namely to restore fiscal stability to our City government. While we may disagree on the proper role of our government and the services it should offer, we all agree on the need for our government to pay its bills and live within its means.

Fund balances

Getting us back to that point of solvency has required more than balancing the budget; it has required that we rebuild our fund balances, or our piggy bank, so that we have

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enough cash on hand to absorb the disjointed timing between the receipt of our revenues and the disbursement of our expenses.

In just three short years, we are nearing the point where we will no longer need to rely on short-term loans for our cash flow. In 2011 we had to borrow \$25 million for cash flow purposes. Last year, because we had cut our expenses and had already begun to significantly rebuild our fund balances, we reduced our need for short term borrowing to \$10 million. This year, if we need to draw down a line of credit at all, it will only be in the \$2 to \$3 million range this fall.

In many respects, it is an acceptable practice for both private-sector and public sector corporations to take out lines of credit. But given where the City was, our short-term borrowing has become symbolic – an indicator for the public of whether we are serious about getting our house in order. And today, as I stand here, I can report to you that the City of Annapolis has fully repaid all of our lines of credit and tax anticipation notes, and we have no short-term debt outstanding.

Bond rating

Perhaps the best objective measure of the City's financial health is our bond rating. And the rating agencies recognize and value the approach we have been taking. As you know, two years ago Moody's Investors Service downgraded our bond rating and assigned the City a Negative Outlook. Last year, in recognition of the prudent fiscal steps we have been taking, Moody's took us off their watch list and restored our Stable Outlook. Moody's wrote:

“The stable outlook reflects the city's proactive measures and expected future commitment to raising revenues and reducing expenditures to improve the city's reserve and liquidity position going forward.”

We are now once again enjoying a Stable outlook from all three major rating agencies.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the work of City Manager Mike Mallinoff and Finance Director Bruce Miller. Not only have they guided us well in our policy decisions, they have also overhauled the City's internal processes and controls, brought transparency to our finances, and played a critical role in getting our fiscal house in order.

Our finances have been our overriding priority for these past three years, but they have not been our only priority.

Economic Development

Economic development continues to be a key focus and, as with our finances, we have made great strides.

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- Two months ago, we cut the ribbon on the City's first-ever Central Permitting counter. This new one-stop shop at 145 Gorman Street brings together all of the departments and agencies that touch a project from the time the application is submitted to when the permit is issued. All permitting, zoning, inspections and code enforcement – even the Fire Marshall – are now under one roof, and accessible at one new phone number: 410-260-2200.
- Last year the City Council streamlined the approval process for everything from major subdivisions to side porch additions, by eliminating a time-consuming, costly and duplicative public hearing.
- The Historic Preservation Commission in turn revised its rules so that now 30 percent of its applications are approved administratively without a hearing.
- And the Annapolis Economic Development Corporation, which this Council established unanimously, continues to prove its worth. Last year the AEDC helped 16 local businesses stay afloat or expand, and has helped recruit more than 60 new companies to Annapolis in the past two years. Currently it is working with more than 110 businesses to locate, stay or grow in Annapolis.

The AEDC partners with organizations such as Project Opportunity to provide business training to our veterans. The AEDC's own Entrepreneurs and Inventors Program has assisted 35 startups and led to three businesses securing direct private funding. And its efforts have brought Annapolis statewide recognition: next month the Maryland Economic Development Association is honoring the creation of the AEDC with its "Project of the year" award.

I would like to ask Board Chair Reza Jafari, President and CEO Lara Fritts, and the other members of the EDC's Board and staff to please stand.

Despite the recession, business and development in our city remain active. Last year alone, Maria Broadbent and her team at DNEP:

- Issued 3,913 Permits
- Conducted 3,816 Property Maintenance Inspections– these are on rental units in the City
- Conducted 10,653 Building and Trade Permit Inspections
- Collected almost \$2 Million (\$ 1,919,227.26) in Permit fees
- And processed permits for a total construction value of more than \$86 Million (\$86,175,620.63)

And I am pleased to report that Annapolis, as always, remains a desirable place in which to live and work, and our efforts are making a difference. Despite some recent closures, all but two stores on Main Street are now leased. Last year more than 100 new businesses opened, including 30 new retail, 13 new food service establishments, 47 new offices, and 3 business expansions. New construction throughout the City is picking up again, and both office and retail vacancy rates are at their lowest levels since 2007.

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Forest Conservation Act

Hand in hand with development is our responsibility to protect the environment. Last year, I changed the development review process to require that we first accurately identify all of the environmental features on a property before reviewing the proposed site plan. As you know, last year the City Council appointed a Forest Conservation Act Working Group to review and recommend further improvements to policies and procedures, as well as substantive criteria, for the City's implementation of the FCA. Alderwoman Sheila Finlayson and Alderman Ian Pfeiffer are serving on this working group, and as they know, this discussion is ongoing.

Planning and Zoning

Our top long-range planning priority remains City Dock, the centerpiece of our town. Relying on significant public input, our Planning and Zoning Department has been working diligently to develop a plan to revitalize our crown jewel, enhance its economic vitality, and ensure that it remains a vibrant community gathering place for years to come. I would also like to personally thank the City Dock Advisory Committee Chaired by former Mayor Kurt Schmoke, and commend Planning Director Jon Arason, Assistant City Manager Virginia Burke, and Chief of Comprehensive Planning Sally Nash for their caring and tireless work on this.

Infrastructure

We cannot have robust economic growth without a solid foundation. By repositioning ourselves financially, we have been able to focus on the nuts and bolts.

- The City successfully negotiated the contract to design and build our new Water Treatment Plant. This project will be the largest public construction project in our City's history, and I commend Public Works Director David Jarrell and the water treatment plant team for a procurement process that will realize roughly 30 percent savings.
- Last Fall we launched Annapolis' Clean and Green City Initiative, deploying a small army of workers to bring our town's physical environment up to the condition it deserves. In just the first few months, our city workers re-set more than 3,000 bricks, repainted almost three miles of curb, repainted more than 100 lampposts and signposts, and weeded the sidewalks on all 29 streets downtown.
- By restructuring and privatizing our solid waste operation, we realized immediate savings for our rate payers, and those savings will grow in the upcoming year.
- We are also answering the call to be reduce our footprint on the earth. By restructuring solid waste, we have increased our recycling levels to an average of 287 tons per month, a 20 percent increase in just one year's time.
- Not only are we recycling more in our homes, several businesses are participating in our commercial recycling pilot program. And we have certified 19

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environmental stewards in our business community for their environmentally sustainable practices.

Internals

Internally, we are continuing to make our government more effective, efficient and transparent, and hold ourselves accountable for our performance.

- We recently launched our online Report It system, a transparent and effective tool to process and respond to a variety of issues, from potholes to streetlights out to abandoned vehicles and more. Report It not only provides a convenient, one-stop location for citizens to report problems, it also enhances our internal accountability to ensure that complaints are responded to promptly and effectively.
- Under the direction of City Manager Michael Mallinoff, and working with the University of Maryland's Institute for Governmental Service and Research, collaboratively created a strategic plan, to better position us and lend clarity to meet the evolving needs of our community.
- Also under Mr. Mallinoff's direction, we are now a participating jurisdiction in ICMA's (the Internal City/County Management Association) Citizen Survey. This survey, based on interviews with 1,000 Annapolis citizens, offers a thorough snapshot for how well we are doing and where we need to improve. And, by benchmarking our performance against 500 other jurisdictions across the country, we will be better able to hold ourselves accountable for the job we are doing.

Public Safety

- We expanded our focus for the former Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and renamed it Emergency Preparedness and Risk Management - while undergoing a name change, the staff remains steadfast in their commitment to serve Annapolis residents during times of crisis:
 1. This is why City of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County are among seven leading communities from across the United States selected to be part of the National Community Resilience Project's Pilot Program - making us more prepared and resilient in the face of disaster.
 2. And speaking of resiliency –Hurricane Sandy's effects were sweeping across Annapolis from October 25th through October 31 and the Office, heading up by Deputy Chief Kevin Simmons, responded to the critical request/needs of the community.
 3. I would also like to mention our Call Center Team, made up of volunteer staff from various departments throughout the city – overseen by Gail Smith – who unselfishly and professionally came during Sandy and responded to nearly 100 calls for assistance. These people became the voice in the dark for many with out power and a means of information to

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many that did not have power. If any of you are in the audience, will you please stand.

The Insurance Services Office, or ISO, classifies fire departments from 10 to 1, with 1 representing the best level of service. There are no Class 1 departments in Maryland. Last year there were only three Class 2 departments, but now there are four. For the first time in our history, Annapolis has been elevated to a Class 2 Fire Department. The public whom we serve should have every confidence in our Fire Department's ability to respond, protect, and assist them.

Our sense of security and public safety is also reflected in our crime rates which remain at their lowest levels since the 1970s. While overall crimes increased less than 1 percent in 2012, violent crimes have dropped some 60 percent in the past six years. Last year robberies dropped 24 percent, and reported rapes dropped in half.

The stability and reliability of our entire public safety team is exemplary. I ask the members present to please stand and be recognized.

Transportation

To fix our broken transportation system, we brought in a new transportation director and replaced our parking management company. We redesigned our bus routes to use a more efficient arterial system. We focused on maintenance, cleanliness and customer service. We created the City's first bicycle master plan. We launched our free Circulator Trolley. And just last month the City Council voted to merge the Transportation Board with the Parking Advisory Committee, recognizing the interrelated nature of the two.

Annapolis Transit's on-time performance has improved from less than 70 percent to 95 percent. Our new parking management company has cleaned and modernized our facilities, and opened free, 24-hour public restrooms in all four parking garages. The Circulator served more than 60,000 riders in its first year, and is on pace to more than double that in its second year. And, garage occupancy and bus ridership have both increased substantially and continue to grow.

Although parking and transportation remain works in progress, we are making real improvements. I would like to ask Transportation Director Richard Newell to please stand and be recognized.

HACA

Although not part of our City government, the Housing Authority of the City Annapolis has been a steadfast partner in serving our mutual citizens and constituents:

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- Due to remarkable progress HACA has made in stabilizing its own finances and internal controls, HUD has removed HACA from the Troubled List and given it a Clean and Clear financial audit.
- HACA established a new, court-certified Banning Program, and instituted a restructured Grievance Panel to hear and respond to tenant complaints.
- It put on the highly successful, second annual Pathways to Opportunities Family Self-Sufficiency Program and Conference.
- And, Lt. Governor Anthony Brown recently announced that Anne Arundel Medical Center, in partnership with HACA and the City of Annapolis, was awarded one of only five grants to establish a new Health Enterprise Zone at Morris Blum Senior High Rise. The Health Enterprise Zone will establish a full time medical present at Morris Blum, and will not only reduce health care costs but will improve health care by proactively addressing long-term chronic disease and other illnesses.

I want to invite Chairman Carl Snowden, Executive Director Vincent Leggett, and the other members of the HACA team, to please stand and be recognized.

Recognizing all employees

In my remarks I have highlighted a few individual employees for their leadership, but I want to recognize all of the City's dedicated employees. Even if you disagree with my job performance, one thing all of us on the Council agree upon is the outstanding quality of our department heads. This level of excellence is reflected throughout our workforce. I want to take a moment to thank all of our employees for their dedication and commitment to our city.

FY 2014 Budget

And that brings us to the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2014. Given the significant course corrections we have made over the past three years, I'm afraid the Fiscal '14 budget may be lacking in similar excitement. In terms of entertainment value, if the past three budgets had enough thrills and excitement for a trilogy of Hollywood action movies, then this proposed budget is more like Downton Abbey – only without the drama. And for a City budget, given all that we've been through, that's not a bad thing.

The theme of this proposed budget is "responsible restraint:"

- Responsible, because I remain committed to continue putting the City's fiscal house in order.
- Restraint, because with the state of our economy, the continued pressure on household incomes, and the contributions we have already asked of taxpayers, we must pursue our priorities while still living within our means.

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Operating Budget

So here are the highlights:

- The operating budget is largely a level-service budget, with \$94.6 Million in expenses, a 1.4 percent increase over FY13.
- The budget projects revenues of \$97.1 million, yielding a surplus of \$2.5 million across all funds. The budget proposes to allocate this surplus into our fund balances, with the understanding that the Council at its discretion may choose to utilize some of that as part of the collaborative Interest Based Bargaining process we have underway with our employee collective bargaining units.
- In terms of taxes, this budget will maintain flat property tax revenues for the second consecutive year. Due to residual adjustments in our assessable base, the budget increases the property tax rate by 1.04 cents, from 64.0 cents to 65.04 cents. Because of individual variations in the assessments which are outside of the City's control, some taxpayers will pay slightly less and others will pay slightly more, but again, overall this budget maintains flat property tax revenues for the second year in a row.
- Last year we reduced the annual solid waste fee by \$48 to reflect the initial efficiencies achieved by privatization. The proposed budget reduces that further, by another \$36 per year, to pass through additional savings that we are realizing.
- What about the size of our workforce? Even though we have had to increase expenses in order to fund neglected liabilities, the size of our workforce today is smaller than it was three years ago when we began our term of office.

A comparison of apples to apples, in which we account for all City employment – full-time, part-time, exempt, civil service, seasonal, permanent and contractual – indicates that the FY2010 budget when we took office had a workforce of 667 Full-Time Equivalent employees. Today, in the Fiscal 13 budget, our workforce is 618, a reduction of more than seven percent.

The proposed Fiscal 14 budget creates a small handful of essential new positions, and reclassifies some existing positions to increase their effectiveness, but due to other reductions elsewhere in the budget, the FY14 budget has fewer net employees than FY13 – it reduces, not increases, the size of our workforce.

Capital Improvement Program

- Our Capital Improvement Program for FY14 is in many ways a catch-up year. For much of FY14 we will still be expending bond money that we had allocated during FY13. Still, the proposed \$10 million FY14 CIP includes some new funding this coming year for essential and urgent projects.

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The major new expense is \$7.5 Million to commence flood mitigation and bulkhead work as recommended by the City Dock Advisory Committee. The CIP also includes in FY14:

- Three-quarters of a million dollars to begin design and engineering for the Hillman Garage. The structural analysis has just been completed, and the Hillman Garage Advisory Committee will hold its first meeting later this week.
- \$220,000 to begin implementation of the beautiful new Wayfinding Signage Master Plan, to enable visitors to efficiently get around and navigate towards parking facilities and major destinations.
- Roughly \$150,000 each for the new community park at Kingsport, and for engineering for the long-overdue replacement of the Truxtun Park swimming pool.
- The CIP also proposes a new \$250,000 project to enable the City to construct new sidewalks in areas where they are lacking. The sidewalk fund we established last year allows the City to repair and replace existing sidewalks, but it does not address the need for infill pedestrian sidewalks along major pedestrian arteries.

So, as I stated at the beginning, the State of our City is strong. In the past I said I wanted Annapolis to be the best run City in the state. Although the ups and downs of the past few years may have made it seem like this goal was out of reach, I am confident we will get there.

Unlike the past three years which required major course corrections on both sides of the ledger, we are now setting sail for calmer waters. We still have a long way to travel, and we have to continue to act now so that long term liabilities looming on the horizon do not become new crises in the future.

The proposed FY14 budget does not chart a new course. Instead it seeks to stay the course and continue the progress we have made.

Thank you.